

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
Division of Health Care Financing
1 W. Wilson St.
Madison WI 53702

To: Food Stamp Handbook Holders

From: Cheryl McIlquham, Director
Bureau of Health Care Eligibility

Re: **FS Handbook Release 04-02**

Release Date: August 13, 2004

Effective Date: August 13, 2004

EFFECTIVE DATE

The following policy additions or changes are effective 08/13/04, unless otherwise noted. **Bold text in the new policy section denotes new text. Text with a strike through it in the old policy section denotes deleted text.**

POLICY CHANGES

01.03.01

Effective 06/13/04

This section on Categorical Eligibility was re-written to include changes due to Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility changes

New Policy:

Food stamp groups are considered categorically eligible if their gross income is at or below 200% FPL and the language describing "JobNet" Services, a partially TANF funded service that all food unit members are authorized to receive, is issued to the group on a CARES generated notice of decision. The following text will appear on FS approval and change notices.

"Wisconsin JobNet is available to you. JobNet is the single largest source of job openings in Wisconsin, you can access Job Net via the internet at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/jobnet/mapWI.htm> or on touch screen monitors at your local job center. To locate a Job Center nearest you call 1-888-258-9966."

The FS group isn't categorically eligible if any member of its food unit loses FS eligibility because s/he:

- 1. Total gross income is above 200%,**
- 2. Was disqualified for an IPV or,**
- 3. Was disqualified due to a drug felony sanction.**

TANF or SSI recipients sanctioned for IPV or Drug Felony maintain individual categorical eligibility for resources only. Resources are excluded and not deemed. Income continues to be deemed.

If the household's gross income goes over 200% of FPL, the case

will close. A negative notices will be sent with reason code 013: Income reported exceeds the program eligibility standard. The 200% gross income limit does not apply to EBD cases.

Don't test a categorically eligible FS group against the FS asset, gross income and net income limits. Calculate the group's net income to determine its allotment amount.

Categorically eligible FS groups with zero benefit allotment amounts will be denied. The denied or closed FS group can file a new application and complete an intake interview if they wish to be reconsidered for FS eligibility.

Case Processing

CARES will deny or close the FS case automatically when the FS group's adjusted income is greater than the allotment amount. CARES will issue a closure notice that will include reason code 557: "Your net income exceeds the level to receive Food Stamp benefits."

If the group re-applies for FS, after being closed one day or more, the group must be assessed for priority service, have a new filing date set, and complete an intake interview.

Special circumstances

Food units with zero FS benefits in their initial benefit month and a FS allotment greater than 0 in the second month, will be denied in the first month and opened in the second month. If the benefit calculation is zero for the first two months, the case will be denied. The 12- month FS certification period will begin the month of application even though the first month may be denied because the allotment amount is zero.

Example 1: Barry applied for FS in August after he lost his job. In the FS benefit determination for August and September, Barry received zero for August (due to excess income) and \$98 in September. His certification period starts in August.

Transitional Food Stamps

If the FS benefit is reduced to zero for the month between the benefit determination month and the month TFS begins the case will remain open.

Example 2: Donna got a job in July and her last W-2 check was issued in August. Her TFS benefit starts in September. Her income from her new job caused her allotment to be reduced to zero for August. The case remains open during the month of August and her TFS benefits start in September.

10.01.00

Old Policy:

4. Any non-custodial parent of a child under the age of 18 must cooperate, as determined by the CSA and ~~DWD~~, with the CSA to establish or enforce a support order for the child.

New Policy:

4. Any non-custodial parent of a child under the age of 18 must cooperate, as determined by the CSA and **DHFS**, with the CSA to establish or enforce a support order for the child.

10.01.01

Old Policy:

The following are good cause for non-cooperation:

1. It can be reasonably anticipated that the FS applicant/participant's cooperation will result in:
 - a) physical or emotional harm to the child, or
 - b) ~~physical or emotional harm to the parent which would reduce the parent's ability to adequately care for the child.~~

New Policy:

The following are good cause for non-cooperation:

1. It can be reasonably anticipated that the FS applicant/participant's cooperation will result in:
 - a) physical or emotional harm to the child **and/or parent, including threats of child kidnapping or domestic abuse.**
 - b) **making it more difficult for the parent or child to escape domestic abuse or risk of further abuse.**

16.07.00

The following section was added to the end of 16.07.00 "Shelter."

New Policy:**Private payments and loans.**

Sometimes a relative or friend who is not a food unit member will pay the food unit's shelter costs directly to the provider or landlord on behalf of the food unit. In such cases, the eligibility worker should determine if the payment is a loan.

If the payment is a loan, it is excluded from income, and the expense is allowed in the shelter computation.

If the payment is not a loan and a relative or friend makes the vendor payment, it must be excluded from income and the shelter expense is not allowed as a deduction.

21.01.04

Old Policy:

Providing SSNs for each household member is voluntary. However failure to provide an SSN will result in the denial of food stamp benefits to each individual failing to provide an SSN. Although SSN and alien status information is not required for household members not applying for benefits, the ESS must determine if the non-applicant household member has income or assets that affect the applying household members' eligibility. If so, that information must be provided and verified in order to determine FS eligibility for the applicant household members. See 05.01.00 SSN Requirements.

~~Note: The paper FS application forms do not yet contain a statement for the applicant to initial that he/she understands that failure to report or verify expenses will result in the expenses not being used in the FS benefit eligibility determination. If a paper application is used, document in case comments that this information was explained to the applicant. Paper FS applications are being revised to include this statement.~~

It is not necessary for applicant signatures to be witnessed by an agency representative for a FS application to be considered complete.

New Policy:

Providing SSNs for each household member is voluntary. However failure to provide an SSN will result in the denial of

food stamp benefits to each individual failing to provide an SSN. Although SSN and alien status information is not required for household members not applying for benefits, the ESS must determine if the non-applicant household member has income or assets that affect the applying household members' eligibility. If so, that information must be provided and verified in order to determine FS eligibility for the applicant household members. See 05.01.00 SSN Requirements.

It is not necessary for applicant signatures to be witnessed by an agency representative for a FS application to be considered complete.

21.02.00

Old Policy:

~~Non-Face to Face (NFTF) reviews are no longer allowed, except when an authorized representative cannot be appointed and one of the these circumstances is true:~~

- ~~1. Recipients can't come to the office because they are elderly or disabled and no other household members are able to come to the office or~~
- ~~2. No household member is available to come to the office due to hardships such as illness, severe weather, lack of transportation, hours of work, etc.~~

~~Document on CARES screen CMCC the reason a FTF review was waived. When a FTF review is waived, a telephone review must be completed. See 21.04.00.~~

~~A waiver of the FTF interview does not exempt the household from the verification requirements, although special procedures may be used to permit the household to provide verification and thus obtain its benefits in a timely manner, such as substituting a collateral contact in cases where documentary verification would normally be provided. See 22.01.00, 22.07.01, and 22.07.02.~~

~~A waiver of the FTF interview may not affect the length of the household's certification period.~~

~~The certification period begins with the month following the last month of the previous certification period.~~

New Policy:

The certification period of the following food units is 6 months:

- 1) food units that include a migrant of seasonal farm worker, or
 - 2) food units that are homeless,
- and

where action is taken in CARES to indicate homelessness or a migrant household member prior to adverse action in month 4 of the certification period.

All other food units have certification periods of 12 months.

FS AGs must complete a review interview and verify current household information in order to be recertified and continue receiving FS benefits. See 25.13 of the Processing Guidelines chapter for change reporting requirements based on the certification period for an AG.

21.03.00

Old Policy:

~~Certification periods are scheduled every twelve months for most AGs. In some circumstances an extra month may be added to the certification period by CARES. For Quality Assurance purposes, it is important for the FS case to receive a correct certification period. If CARES adds any extra months to the certification period, change the next review date to ensure a correct certification period.~~

New Policy:

A telephone interview may be conducted instead of a face-to-face interview when an authorized representative cannot be appointed and one of the following circumstances is true:

1. Recipients can't come to the office because they are elderly or disabled and no other food unit members are able to come to the office or
2. No food unit member is available to come to the office due to hardships such as:
 - illness,
 - severe weather,
 - lack of transportation ,
 - hours of work,
 - other hardship situation

Document on CARES screen CMCC the reason a FTF review was waived. When a FTF review is waived, a telephone review must be completed. See 21.04.00.

A waiver of the FTF interview does not exempt the household from the verification requirements, although special procedures may be used to permit the household to provide verification and thus obtain its benefits in a timely manner, such as substituting a collateral contact in cases where documentary verification would normally be provided. See 22.01.00, 22.07.01, and 22.07.02.

A waiver of the FTF interview may not affect the length of the household's certification period.

The certification period begins with the month following the last month of the previous certification period.

Do not allow the following FS groups to do a telephone interview:

Food Units that include an individual who has committed an Intentional Program Violation.

21.03.01

This new subsection called **Completing Telephone Interviews** was added.

New Policy:

See 21.03.00 for when telephone interviews may be conducted. At the start of the telephone interview make a verbal agreement with the client that s/he will complete the application or recertification interview over the phone. Make a note of the agreement in case comments (CARES screen ACCC) and include the reason that the FS group was eligible for a telephone interview.

Go over the CAF with the client using the intake or review driver flows in the CARES system. Access the data exchange information for the case and act on any information that you find. If there are discrepancies in the information, resolve those differences during the interview and/or verification process. At the end of the interview, review all information provided with the client.

21.03.02

This new subsection called **Post-Interview Process** was added.

New Policy:

At the end of the telephone interview, print the CAF. Instruct the client that you will be mailing the printed CAF to them for their signature. Provide a copy of the CAF to the client if they request it. The CAF should be signed and returned to the agency within 10 days. The review is not complete until the signed CAF signature page is returned to the agency.

If the signed CAF signature page is not returned within the ten day period, close the case for failure to sign the application (closure code 045).

21.03.03

This new subsection called **Verification of Information** was added.

New Policy:

After the interview, if verification is needed, print out a verification list and send it to the client with instructions to provide the listed documents to the FS worker within 10 days.

If the FS household claims deductible expenses during the telephone review, the household must verify the claimed deductions or the deduction will not be allowed. If the client fails to provide verification of deductions, do not allow the deduction and do not close the case.

21.05.00

This section on Telephone Interviews was deleted.

21.06.00

Old Policy:

2. Income:

- Unearned: ~~Changes of more than \$50 except child support, in which case it's more than \$100.~~

New Policy:

2. Income:

- Unearned: **new source- increases of more than \$100 per month in child support income; increases of more than \$50 per month in other types of unearned income."**

22.02.04

Old Policy:

Don't discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnic background, or national origin when deciding if a claim is questionable. Don't target groups such as migrant farm workers or American Indians for verification. A surname, accent or appearance that seems foreign isn't enough reason to question citizenship.

New Policy:

Don't discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnic background,

national origin **or political beliefs** when deciding if a claim is questionable. Don't target groups such as migrant farm workers or American Indians for verification. A surname, accent or appearance that seems foreign isn't enough reason to question citizenship.

24.02.14

Old policy:

~~If expunged benefits are re-issued, contact the DES CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center to request a system correction to delete the adjusted amount on BVCD.~~

New policy: If expunged benefits are re-issued, contact the Public Assistance Collection Unit to adjust the claim. The address is 201 E. Washington Ave Rm. A200, PO Box 8938, Madison, WI 53708-8938
Phone: 1-800-943-9499
Fax: 1-608-266-8302

24.02.15

A FNS 135 (Affidavit of Return or Exchange of Food Coupons) is required before a repayment is processed on the EBT system. This form was assigned a DHFS form number, HCF 09002. The form number was added in this section. Use this form number when ordering the forms from DHFS.

24.02.16

Guam was converted to EBT on June 1, 2004.

Old policy:

The food stamp AG should be able to use the Wisconsin QUEST card at retail stores certified by FNS in most states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

New policy: The food stamp AG should be able to use the Wisconsin QUEST card at retail stores certified by FNS in most states, the District of Columbia, **Guam**, and the Virgin Islands.

24.02.16.01

Additional stores were added where EBT cardholders can shop in Ohio and Wyoming.

24.02.19.01

A new sentence has been added to clarify that retailers are not required to use manual vouchers when the system is unavailable.

Old policy: Cardholders will access the appropriate food stamp account in retail food stores authorized by FNS ~~within the Wisconsin EBT project area.~~

New policy: Cardholders will access the appropriate food stamp account in retail food stores authorized by FNS **in Wisconsin, most states, the District of Columbia, Guam and the Virgin Islands.**
See 24.02.16 for exceptions.

24.02.19.02

24.02.19.02 was named Border States. Because all states can accept the QUEST card, this information is obsolete. The section is now named *Authorization to Participate in the Food Stamp Program*. Wisconsin retailers must be certified by FNS to accept food stamp benefits. Retailers should contact FNS at 1-877-823-4369 to request an application to participate in the Food Stamp Program.

24.02.19.03

A new section called *EBT-Only Equipment* has been added. Many Wisconsin retail stores own their own POS equipment or lease it

through a third party processor. If the store does not have POS equipment, DHFS (through J.P. Morgan EFS) will provide a POS terminal or terminals if the retailer has \$100 or more per month in food stamp redemption activity and has the capability to support operation of the terminal(s). The equipment and services must be utilized solely for the Food Stamp Program.

24.03.03.04

Old policy: If you need EBT transaction information that is older than 90 days, ~~email the CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center~~ to request this information.

New policy: If you need EBT transaction information that is older than 90 days, email **Tim Burnett** at burneti@dhfs.state.wi.us or **Judy Woelfel** at woelfja@dhfs.state.wi.us to request this information.

24.03.04.01

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24.05.00, Appendix C

The Wisconsin QUEST card mailer has been updated with the DHFS logo and phone numbers for translation services and civil rights.

24.05.00, Appendix G

A message was added to the CAPS Troubleshooting Guide. "Pick Up Card" means the card was cancelled and is unusable. It should be destroyed.

25.04

Old Policy:

The new CARES wage detail screen, (AFWG), allows workers to more accurately record earned income information and verification and allows automated calculation of monthly earned income for all programs. Use income received during the last 30 days as an indicator of the income that is and will be available to the household during the certification period unless that income does not accurately indicate changes in income that have occurred or are anticipated to occur.

New Policy:

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may use income received during the last 30 days as an indicator of the income that is and will be available to the household during the certification period unless that income does not accurately indicate changes in income that have occurred or are anticipated to occur.

25.04

New Policy:**SMRF Income Verification and Processing**

While the SMRF instructs the customer to provide proof of the income for the “change month,” –pay stubs or an employer statement—the ESS may use other methods to calculate the prospective income, as always.

Example: The customer submits a dated letter from their employer which adequately estimates hours and rate(s) for the future, instead of the last 30 days’ pay record.

Example: The customer is to report income for the month of September, but submits the paystubs for last two weeks in September, plus the first two weeks in October. The ES is able to project income using 30 days of pay.

25.09

This paragraph was added to the Alien Eligibility Chart in item 16 “Battered Alien.”

New Policy:

Code the battered immigrant adult or child or parent with the broadest immigrant eligibility category that applies to that person (e.g., a battered refugee immigrant, code as refugee). Document in case comments that the person is a battered immigrant and therefore exempt from sponsor deeming. Do not list the sponsor in CARES on ACCH. Do not list any of the sponsor's income and assets.

25.15

This section on Transitional Food Stamps in the Processing Guidelines section was updated based on changes from Ops Memo 04-07. The changes are too numerous to list.